

Web-Chat Date: November 9, 2010

Topic: Situational Awareness

Abstract: Situational Awareness (SA) involves being aware of what is happening around individuals to understand how information, events, and the person's own actions will impact certain immediate and upcoming goals and objectives. Lacking SA or having inadequate SA has been identified as one of the primary factors attributed to human error (e.g., Hartel, Smith, & Prince, 1991). Situation awareness determines accessibility of a comprehensive and coherent situation representation which is continuously being updated in accordance with the results of recurrent situation assessments. Particularly, the combining of new information with existing knowledge in working memory and the development of a composite picture of the situation along with projections of future status and subsequent decisions as to specify appropriate courses of action to take.

Undoubtedly, the field and issues concerning Situational Awareness is vast and complex, especially more so when discussing its relevancy with the development and proficiency skill impact in the ELT situational setting.

Sample questions involve:

- a.) How SA reveals teachers' perception and identification of their academic roles and responsibilities?
- b.) What particular identification of SA influences various learning goals, class objectives, and lesson plan designs?
- c.) To what extent, effective Situational Awareness can help teachers and learners determine the students' language learning needs and constraints as well as identifying the availability level of the existing pedagogical resources?

In this web-chat, we explore these questions and issues.

Transcript:

Damon Anderson: Everyone, welcome to our new chat room. I know it looks the same, but we hope the connection will be better for everyone.

Damon Anderson: Please feel free to submit any pre-questions or comments. We will start our chat about 5 minutes.

Wang Ping: Hi everyone! This is Wang Ping from Beijing. The connect is really good till now.

Cindy Cao: Hi, this is Cao from Hainan. The connect is excellent now.

Damon Anderson: If the connection is significantly better, we may try using voice and video in future chats.

Damon Anderson: Helo Dom Do, Idear Rusian and Jill. Welcome to our chat!

Damon Anderson: Sorry, that is Idwar Rusian.

Jill Kester: Hello all! This is Jill Kester, ELF in Beijing.

Idwar Ruslan 2: Hi, this is Idwar from Jakarta. The connection is better now.

Bill Templer: Sabaidee. Bill in Bulgaria

Damon Anderson: And Welcome to Bill and Tresha.

Tresha: Hi to everybody on line from Tresha in Taiwan.

Damon Anderson: We have a few comments and questions, so let's begin our chat. I will move the boxes in a moment to make this chat box a little bigger.

Cindy Cao: How does SA influence learner's goals in Advanced English Class for English Majors?

Bill Templer: SA in simple terms is "being aware of what's happening with our students and with us, in and out of interaction." To my mind, one natural bridge between SA and ELT is DOGME. WOULD ANYONE AGREE? Meddings and Thornbury (TEACHING UNPLUGGED, 2009) outline a few of its characteristics: "****Interactivity between learners and teachers should be the focus of classroom activity. ***Content for classes should mainly come out of the engagement with 'the people in the room'. ***Knowledge should be co-constructed and come out of dialogue rather than be transmitted to the learners from the teacher. ***The teacher should shape and support (scaffolding) learning that emerges through conversation. ***Language learning is an organic process, based on what emerges from dialogue." DOGME centered on "students' language learning needs and constraints" in a distinctive way, grounded on some kind of special Situational Awareness. WHAT YOU THINK?

Bill Templer: Another bridge from heightened SA to pedagogy is SITUATED COGNITION. I personally think that is a more exciting theoretical frame. Connected with experiential education, Dewey's call for an "intelligent theory of experience," and much more. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Situated_cognition Situated cognition is also linked to the 'social ecology' of pedagogy, which I guess Situational Awareness is part of, the 'ecology' of language learning & teaching as the broader frame. DOES THIS MAKE ANY SENSE?

Damon Anderson: In much simpler terms, I think that Situational Awareness is broadening how we look at the Affective Domain.

Damon Anderson: It is bringing cultural perceptions in the picture, as well as the physical environment and the emotional environment.

Cindy Cao: It also depends on teachers' knowledge of history and culture to carry effective activities

Jill Kester: Is SA being studied/researched in the actual classroom (as they are doing with pilots to cut down on human error) or are we using it more as a foundational theory from which to approach our teaching?

Damon Anderson: I believe that some people are beginning to research it (in education, not TEFL). For us, I believe we are using it more as a foundational theory from which to approach our teaching.

Cindy Cao: yes

Wang Ping: That's interesting to know, Damon. I was wondering if reflective teaching and learning would help build up SA?

Damon Anderson: Yes, Ping. They definitely would!

Cindy Cao: Please make it specific with age, Damon

Tresha: So SA would affect a teacher's professional development and her students' progress, isn't it?

Damon Anderson: Cindy, there are many possible ways of approaching or looking at SA. How students are seated and allowed to engage with one another as well as with the teacher are examples.

Jill Kester: Damon, thank you! I'm thinking about a local primary English teacher who said "What's wrong?" when I called her on the phone. Nothing was wrong, I just needed to ask her a few questions. It confused me for a minute when she responded to a friendly call in such a way. So if I look at this through the SA lens, I, as an instructor (and Fellow in China) need to be aware of common Chinese errors and I

also can offer her some feedback as to when to say "What's wrong?" and what happens when that phrase is used.

Damon Anderson: Yes, that is an interesting example, Jill.

Wang Ping: That's a perfect example, Jill, of how short of cultural awareness could lead to misunderstanding.

Jill Kester: I think it'd be great to really study a conversation involving at least one English lang. learner and analyze it in terms of SA.

Cindy Cao: Thanks, Damon, I got it. In which aspect does SA influence learners' needs and constraints?

Bill Templer: a major problem even paradox in group work is that a teacher can't be aware of what is happening the students have to become aware in their own mini-situations of the group. How is SA applicable in such a complex ecology of interaction?

Idwar Ruslan: I ususally start teaching by asking a few question just to make sure that the students are involved. The problem is after discussing much with the students, they feel they are not aware of what they have learned. I think SA may have a relationship with the culture (I am not quite sure about this).

Bill Templer: I use group work a lot but am baffled often about what is really going on simultaneously in a class of 35

Damon Anderson: I am sorry for seeming to drop out of the conversation for a couple of minutes. We have some folks in the old chat room that are trying to find this chat room. I'll be right back. Please keep on chatting.

Jill Kester: Idwar, I think culture plays a HUGE part in SA.

Cindy Cao: I also use group work but find diffict to supervise students' job

Damon Anderson: If you are doing collaborative groups vs cooperative groups, the instructor should be giving less direction and less supervision.

Bill Templer: a big obstacle in teaching many Thai teens and adults is reluctance to speak in front of peers, the culture of protecting 'face' that is a powerful affective element in most Thai classrooms elsewhere as well I found drama one way to overcome this. But hard to be aware who is feeling reluctant to speak for reasons of kreng jai in Thailand.

Jill Kester: It would be beneficial to teach students not only about the culture of the language they are learning but also about how to build their awareness of cultures (including their own) .

Jill Kester: Cindy, that's a challenge, especially in larger classes! Perhaps you could assign roles to group members and have one person report back to you about the group's activity.

Tresha: I tell Ss the rubric I'm using to evaluate their group work but it's not perfect. However they would do better if they know what I was looking at.

Wang Ping: It may also help to encourage group-information activities, in that, the whole class, obth teachher and students would regularly share expectations and thoughts about what's going on in the class in hope to reduce anxiety and promote confidence-building. This is raised in a book on teaching English to young children, but I think it applies to teens and adults too. One functions better in a friendly, less threatening atmosphere, especaiily for language learners.

Damon Anderson: I agree that giving students clear directions as to what to do and giving them the rubric on how they will be assessed is a magic combination that often helps.

Bill Templer: SA should mean teachers better seeing themselves in action inviting colleagues for mutual peer observation is one mirror. But that is very uncommon in my experience in SE Asia. Few Thai or

Malaysian teachers would ever try to become better aware of their own classes by working with a colleague in mutual observation May be different in Hainan, I don't know.

Jill Kester: Bill, you raise a good point. Would colleagues in China be comfortable doing peer observation?

Wang Ping: Peer observation would certainly help. In Chinese context, that can be challenging .

Damon Anderson: Jill, it is a worldwide question, not just a China question. Teachers are often reluctant to have colleagues and administrators observe their classes.

Tresha: Bill, I think it's the same in Taiwan. But I am videotaping my teaching and share it with an English teacher learning community. It helps me a lot in clearing my teaching perceptions and gets feedback from the other teachers.

Bill Templer: Wang Ping is right about less threatening atmosphere fear of tests build threat competition builds threat cultures of face-saving build threat I suspect reluctance of Thai teachers to do mutual observation is because it is a specific kind of threat inside Thai interpersonal culture.

Damon Anderson: Perhaps video taping and audio taping a class then watching and listening to the tapes with a mentor or peer might be somehow less threatening.

Bill Templer: so I guess one aspect of better SA is learning to see what is raising what Krashen calls the affective filter Those filters differ from student to student but we have our own affective filter as teachers and try to avoid looking in the mirror I'm sure of this.

Damon Anderson: SA is about being observant of how we engage with each other and the factors that contribute to that engagement. Culture is certainly one of the biggest factors. But culture here means work culture as well as the more general culture.

Damon Anderson: I have seen students react differently with a foreign teacher than with a teacher from their own culture. The students have no expectations of the foreign teacher, but they do in terms of their engagement with their own teacher.

Jill Kester: Damon, that's a great idea. Plus the video tape will help the teacher 'see' the lesson from another perspective as well.

Tresha: Jill, that's how we got perspectives from different angles.

Wang Ping: Sometimes, a little more patience would also help. I have seen many parents and teachers too eager to see the result, to push students to show what they have learned. But we should also allow students to learn and absorb at their own pace. Not everyone would get it the first session. Some life skills take years to sink in, to come into function.

Bill Templer: community pf practice is a good concept in looking at some of this classrooms become communities of practice the culture of those classrooms is often very destructive of learning. Students know this. Too many aspects of learning communities of practice become conventionalized. The trick is to crack through that frozen sea. SA sometimes may mean seeing what makes that crack.

Bill Templer: I agree with Wang Ping the result is often a 'better grade' on what will be tested not real learning and not giving students self-confidence to believe in their own motivation.

Damon Anderson: Yes, Bill, you have hit the nail on the head, I believe. In a talk I will give soon I am talking about creating an Open Mindset in the classroom rather than foster the traditional Closed Mindset.

Tresha: If we could really do formative assessment, maybe sometimes "better grade" does mean something.

Tresha: If we could really do formative assessment, maybe sometimes "better grade" does mean something.

Bill Templer: yes closed and locked tight mindset I know that is there in Thailand and Malaysia. I suspect in many corners of the PRC.

Damon Anderson: Well, we are at the end of our time. I am sorry that several of our colleagues who wanted to be in this chat could not get into the room due to some technical difficulties.

Damon Anderson: Do you have any suggestions for topics for our next chat?

Bill Templer: it would be great to have a direct talk chat instead of typing

Wang Ping: That's true Bill. But I think teachers would argue that they themselves are vulnerable, too, to high admin demand and other sources of stress.

Tresha: Enjoy the rest of the day! Looking forward to chatting again next month.

Bill Templer: re suggestions teacher development and its obstacles is interesting if we are all teachers teacher trainers I have a special interest in that re Thailand

Damon Anderson: Bill, we have tried that in the past, but due to connection problems and bandwidth, it was not feasible for most of the participants.

Damon Anderson: Also, people like being able to go back and read what someone has said.

Tresha: So true!

Tresha: I'd like to have a copy too.

gloria C. Kismadi: Ditto to that.

Bill Templer: yes in writing is always good

Wang Ping: Thank you everyone. It's been great "talking" to you all. I have learned a great deal. Looking forward to seeing you all next time!!

Damon Anderson: The transcripts will be posted on the RELO web sites.

gloria C. Kismadi: Thank you!

Tresha: Thank you, Damon.

Jill Kester: Thank you!

Damon Anderson: Again, I am sorry that I was not able to comment very much. I was busy going back and forth between the two web sites and trying to work out the technical difficulties.

Damon Anderson: Next time, we all should be in this chat room without any glitches!!

Damon Anderson: Thank you everyone for your participation and your patience.

paul: hi all

Bill Templer: a good topic is how new media are being used in classrooms including cellphone as a learning tool and certainly Internet

paul: sorry i am late

Damon Anderson: Hello Diem Do. We are moving our webchat today to the new chat room. Please see the information in the note-box to the left. Hope to see you there.

Damon Anderson: Hello Cao Lingjuan and Idwar Rusian. We have moved to a new chat room. Please see the address in the box to the left. See you there.

Wang Ping: Hi, Professor Cao and Jill, we have moved the site. Please follow us. Talk to you soon!

Wang Ping: Hi Tresha, we are moved. Please follow us.

Wang Ping: Nina, Hi. Are you with us in another room?

Wang Ping: Hi Paul and everyone, Please follow us to the new chat room.

Wang Ping: The URL for the new chat room is in the left box

Damon Anderson: Everyone, please go to our new website. See the box to the left.

Wang Ping: Hi Laura Mizuha, try the URL in the box to the left. Does it work?

Damon Anderson: Everyone, I am working on the problem.

gloria C. Kismadi: How can I connect?

Damon Anderson: Gloria and everyone, I am trying to find the tech person to assist us. Thank you for your patience.

Laura Mizuha: When I try it, it says "user limit is exceeded" and I can't get in.

Damon Anderson: The TECH guys are working on it. That is all I can say at this point in time. I am so sorry everyone that this has happened!!

Damon Anderson: For those who are here, let me put up the chat that is happening:

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Tresha: Hi to everybody on line from Tresha in Taiwan.

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Damon Anderson: Awareness is part of, the 'ecology' of language learning & teaching as the broader frame. DOES THIS MAKE ANY SENSE?

Damon Anderson: Everyone, It was too difficult to cut and paste the chat into this chat box.

Damon Anderson: We are at the end of the chat. Please come to the RELO web site to see a transcript of the chat.

Damon Anderson: Do you have any ideas for topics for the next chat?

Cao Lingjuan: How SA reveals teachers' perception and identification of their academic roles and responsibilities

Phanisara: Great suggestion Cao.

Nha: Can you tell me the address of RELO web site?

Damon Anderson: <http://bangkok.usembassy.gov/education/english-language-program.html>

Damon Anderson: Everyone, I am so sorry for the technical glitches today. Adobe Connect is working to solve the issue so that we do not have this same problem the next time.

Damon Anderson: Thank you all for your understanding and patience.

Laura Mizuha: Hello... I can't get into the other room.

paul: where?

paul: i donot know ,sorry

Laura Mizuha: It says the user limit is exceeded.

paul: website?

paul: oh dear

Laura Mizuha: yes, but when i logged in it won't let me enter the webchat

Laura Mizuha: "The user limit for this account has been exceeded."

Nha: I go to the new website but it doesn't work. It says "The user limit for this account has been exceeded. Contact your meeting organizer for assistance"

paul: o oh god

paul: it does work

paul: doesnot

paul: i down lard something

paul: but no use

paul: oh dear , i am working on it too

paul: send many time on working on connecting

paul: spend

paul: it is advanced

paul: yeah

paul: oh

paul: thanks for your work

paul: and also thanks for your patience

paul: it said you need a password

paul: thanks Damon ,and all

paul: you already made your effort.we will wait

thuy pham: I can't open the page. Sorry

thuy pham: I have the same problem as Laura's

paul: i want to use a cam,hehe

paul: i want tell my idea about a good teacher

paul: last time we discussed it

paul: a good teacher is not only knowing the teaching methods
paul: but also knowing how to put up with a new theory a kind of philosophy
paul: hi all , it goes well
paul: a good teacher is not only knowing the teaching methods , it is my first sentence
paul: by the way ,knowing some psychology is first step
paul: ok , move on our topic today
paul: i thought our class is just like natural environment
paul: we need to make it friendly to human as we make our class is friendly and efficient to our students
Tony JLU: I am all for "co-construction",but what do you think could be the limitations of that approach for the Chinese learner?
paul: ?no one here?
Phanisara: From little that I read here. This is great input. Love what Khun Bill shared. Great discussion.
Laura Mizuha: Thank you for your efforts, Damon.
paul: well today's topic is nice
paul: i have many words to say
paul: so i hope we can discuss it longer
Tony JLU: Learning Styles...H.G. When I do workshops on this topic, the teachers find it very useful.
thuy pham 2: I got this answer from the RELO website.
